

Tom Paine's New World Order: Idealistic Internationalism in the Ideology of Early American Foreign Relations

No person figures more prominently in the ideology of early American foreign relations than Tom Paine.¹ According to Felix Gilbert, "For a long time" after the publication of *Common Sense* in January 1776, "every utterance on foreign policy starts with Paine's words and echoes his thoughts." Michael Howard asserts that, after the publication of *Rights of Man* in 1791–92, "virtually every liberal or socialist who has written about foreign policy since then has been able to provide little more than an echo" to Paine's philippic on revolutionary internationalism and the domestic sources of foreign policy and war. Paine shaped not only the elite ideology that diplomatic historians have traditionally examined; he wrote *The Crisis*, *Common Sense*, and *Rights of Man* – the latter two arguably the most momentous publications of the age – primarily to influence the way ordinary people thought about international relations and war.² Considering his significance in early American history, it is surprising that Paine's views on international rela-

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1. In this essay the term "foreign policy ideology" refers to, as Michael Hunt puts it, "sets of beliefs and values, sometimes only poorly and partially articulated, that make international relations intelligible and decision making possible." Michael H. Hunt, "Ideology," in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, ed. Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson (New York, 1991), 194. Broader but similar is Akira Iriye's definition of the "cultural approach to diplomatic history" as being the examination of international affairs in terms of "dreams, aspirations, and other manifestations of human consciousness." Akira Iriye, "Culture and International History," in *ibid.*, 214. See also Bradford Perkins's discussion of the "prism of cultural values" in Perkins, *The Creation of a Republican Empire, 1776–1865* (New York, 1993), 9–16. Political scientists are increasingly incorporating such concerns into their work on international relations. See, for instance, Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, eds., *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change* (Ithaca, 1993).

2. Felix Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address: Ideas of Early American Foreign Policy* (Princeton, 1961), 43; Michael Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience* (New Brunswick, 1977), 29. Published on 10 January 1776, *Common Sense* sold one hundred thousand copies in America by March. In a population of only three million, total sales were roughly four hundred thousand copies, the equivalent of over thirty million copies today. Because its style was conducive to public readings in taverns, churches, and other meeting places, surely a larger number heard its message. Its French translation was an immediate sensation in Paris. See Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York, 1985), 35; and Michael Foot and Isaac Kramnick, eds., *Thomas Paine Reader* (New York, 1987), 10.

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tions have not been more thoroughly explored by his biographers and historians concerned with early American ideology.³

Paine's ideas on international relations are best described as "idealistic internationalism," a term Felix Gilbert developed in *To the Farewell Address*, a 1961 monograph that was highly influential until 1977, when James Hutson vigorously challenged it in the lead article of the first issue of *Diplomatic History*.⁴ Gilbert argued that the Founders, inspired by the philosophes, hoped that their revolution would commence a reformation of the world, that it would usher in a new era of peace and free trade that would eventually replace the customary system of great-power war and mercantilism. Hutson insisted that Gilbert's interpretation was a myth, that instead the Founders feared international commerce and thought in the traditional mode of European statesmen. Most historians favor Hutson over Gilbert.⁵ Before addressing Paine's idealistic internationalism, first we must examine Hutson's critique of Gilbert's discovery in light of subsequent scholarship and find that, although traditional concerns were obviously important, his refutation of Gilbert and idealistic internationalism fails to hold up under scrutiny.

Central to Hutson's critique is his assertion that the Founders opposed foreign commerce in theory and would have "extirpated" it if it had been in their power to do so. Following the "civic humanist" or "classical republican" paradigm of Gordon Wood and J. G. A. Pocock, Hutson asserts that the Founders' paramount concern was the creation and preservation of a repub-

3. Aspects of Paine's thought on international relations are discussed in Darrel Abel, "The Significance of the Letter to the Abbe Raynal in the Progress of Thomas Paine's Thought," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 66 (April 1942): 176-90; A. Owen Aldridge, *Thomas Paine's American Ideology* (Newark, 1984), 269-85; Gregory Claeys, *Thomas Paine: Social and Political Thought* (Boston, 1989); Gilbert, *Farewell Address*; David A. Wilson, *Paine and Cobbett: The Transatlantic Connection* (Kingston, Ontario, 1988); and Arnold Wolfers and Laurence W. Martin, *The Anglo-American Tradition in Foreign Affairs* (New Haven, 1956), 126-38. On Paine in general see Claeys, *Social and Political Thought*; Aldridge, *American Ideology*; idem, *Man of Reason: The Life of Thomas Paine* (New York, 1959); A. J. Ayer, *Thomas Paine* (Chicago, 1988); Moncure Conway, *The Life of Thomas Paine* (1892; reprint, New York, 1969); Eric Foner, *Thomas Paine and Revolutionary America* (New York, 1967); Jack Fruchtman, Jr., *Thomas Paine and the Religion of Nature* (Baltimore, 1993); idem, *Thomas Paine: Apostle of Freedom* (New York, 1994); Isaac Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism* (Ithaca, 1990), 133-60; and Audrey Williamson, *Thomas Paine: His Life, Work, and Times* (London, 1973).

4. James H. Hutson, "Intellectual Foundations of Early American Diplomacy," *Diplomatic History* 1 (Winter 1977): 1-19. He reworks the article into chapter seven of his *John Adams and the Diplomacy of the American Revolution* (Lexington, KY, 1980). Classic examples of Gilbert's influence include the first chapter of James A. Field, Jr., *America and the Mediterranean World, 1776-1882* (Princeton, 1969); and Merrill Peterson, "Thomas Jefferson and Commercial Policy, 1783-1793," *William and Mary Quarterly* 22 (October 1965): 584-610.

5. See, for instance, Walter LaFeber, "Liberty and Power in U.S. Diplomatic History, 1750-1945," in *The New American History*, ed. Eric Foner (Philadelphia, 1990), 277-78. See also Jonathan Dull's judgment that Hutson "persuasively refutes" Gilbert in his essay "American Foreign Relations before the Constitution: A Historiographical Wasteland," in *American Foreign Relations: A Historiographical Review*, ed. Gerald K. Haines and J. Samuel Walker (Westport, CT, 1981), 5. Note the presence of Hutson and the absence of Gilbert in the third edition of Thomas G. Paterson, ed., *Major Problems in American Foreign Policy* (Lexington, MA, 1989).

lic. Central to this design was civic virtue, a passion for the public good rather than one's selfish interests. The antithesis of virtue and a primary threat to the republic was luxury, the principal purveyor of which was foreign commerce. He concludes that, although they knew they could not abolish it, the Founders "condemned unsparingly" foreign commerce because it undermined the virtue necessary to sustain the republican experiment.⁶

Although Wood and Pocock are acknowledged giants in the field, we must keep in mind that their "republican hypothesis" is just that, a hypothesis. In response to Wood and Pocock, a sizable body of literature written mostly after 1977 by John Diggins, Thomas Pangle, Steven Dworetz, and others rejects the civic republican thesis in favor of an interpretation that sees the founding as essentially liberal. Isaac Kramnick, for instance, sees the dominant ideology as one of "bourgeois radicalism," the pro-commerce voice of an ascendent middle class in a burgeoning commercial republic. J. E. Crowley contends that, although some were hostile to commerce, the majority of Americans embraced it as central to their republicanism. Most importantly, Joyce Appleby's large corpus of work examines the prevalence of pro-market social theorizing and other liberal themes and argues persuasively that such ideas dominated the intellectual milieu in the latter third of the eighteenth century. Before accepting Hutson's critique of Gilbert, diplomatic historians must consider the other half of the debate between, as Jack Rakove puts it, the "neo-republican gang of four (J. G. A. Pocock, John Murrin, Lance Banning, and Drew McCoy) and the neo-liberal (or 'capitalist roaders') band of three (Joyce Appleby, Isaac Kramnick, and John Diggins)."⁷

Furthermore, even scholars unconvinced by the neo-liberal school of Appleby have identified strong sentiments in favor of free trade. For exam-

6. Hutson, "Foundations," 6-9. Hutson cites Wood, *Creation of the American Republic 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill, 1969); and J. G. A. Pocock, "Virtue and Commerce in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 3 (Summer 1972): 119-34. For a survey of the republicanism debate see Daniel T. Rodgers, "Republicanism: The Career of a Concept," *Journal of American History* 79 (June 1992): 11-38; Robert E. Shalhope, "Toward a Republican Synthesis: The Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American Historiography," *William and Mary Quarterly* 29 (January 1972): 49-80; and idem, "Republicanism and Early American Historiography," *William and Mary Quarterly* 39 (April 1982): 334-56.

7. John Patrick Diggins, *The Lost Soul of American Politics: Virtue, Self-Interest, and the Foundations of Liberalism* (New York, 1984); Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism: The Moral Vision of the American Founders and the Philosophy of Locke* (Chicago, 1988); Steven M. Dworetz, *The Unvarnished Doctrine: Locke, Liberalism, and the American Revolution* (Durham, 1990); Kramnick, *Republicanism*; J. E. Crowley, *This Sheba, Self: The Conceptualization of Economic Life in Eighteenth-Century America* (Baltimore, 1974); Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (New York, 1984); idem, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge, MA, 1992); Jack N. Rakove, "Gordon S. Wood, the 'Republican Synthesis' and the Path not Taken," *William and Mary Quarterly* 44 (July 1987): 620. Future research on the Revolution must move beyond this sharp dichotomy. Revolutionary ideology involved both classical republicanism and a liberalism indebted mostly to Locke and the Scottish Enlightenment, as well as religious themes. See James T. Kloppenberg, "Christianity, Republicanism, and Ethics in Early American Political Discourse," *Journal of American History* 74 (June 1987): 9-33.

ple, in *The Elusive Republic*, Drew McCoy argues that the Founders hoped to maintain the United States as an agricultural republic and keep the corrupting influences of urbanization and industrialization overseas for as long as possible through a vigorous policy of continental expansion and free trade. Many Americans believed that a salutary effect of free trade would be more peaceful international relations due to the "civilizing effect" of commerce on morals and the greater understanding that would emerge from increased contact among peoples.⁸

Most importantly, the question of commerce in the work of Wood and Pocock is more complex than Hutson's article indicates. According to Hutson, the Founders "condemned unsparingly" foreign commerce in general because it was the principal source of luxury. However, as Lance Banning underscores, "It needs to be emphatically reemphasized that even in the writings of Pocock, which stress the antithesis of virtue and commerce, it is not commerce defined as exchange that is identified as a focus of 18th-century worries." It was instead the "alliance of government, finance, and standing army" and the luxuries and corruption emerging from that alliance, specifically, not commerce in general, that the Founders abhorred. Gordon Wood pointedly emphasizes that, although they disdained the acquisitive appetites they perceived as motivating most ordinary Americans, the Founders all "favored commerce, by which they generally meant international trade, and many of them envisioned the United States becoming a great and wealthy commercial nation."⁹

The danger, therefore, was not from foreign commerce in general but from, as Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick describe it in the context of the 1790s, an "unholy alliance of commerce, manufacturing, money, and public credit, fostered by an intrusive and interfering government." Thus, Hutson's contention that "the consensus among American leaders" was that "an unrestricted exchange of goods with foreign nations was among the greatest potential threats to the Revolutionary experiment in free government" is misleading: Corruption loomed precisely when government and allied financial interests restricted trade.¹⁰

Although recent scholarship undermines Hutson's arguments about commerce, his second main argument against Gilbert, that historians of early

8. Drew McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill, 1980), esp. 76–104. William Earl Weeks argues that McCoy's work suggests that "America's most enduring export has been a revolutionary ideology that promises nothing less than a new world order based on the principles of liberal capitalism." Weeks, "New Directions in the Study of American Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History* 17 (Winter 1993): 85.

9. Hutson, "Foundations," 6; Lance Banning, "Jeffersonian Ideology Revisited: Liberal and Classical Ideas in the New American Republic," *William and Mary Quarterly* 43 (January 1986): 10; J. G. A. Pocock, ed., *The Political Works of James Harrington* (Cambridge, MA, 1977), 151; Gordon Wood, "Ideology and the Origins of Liberal America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 44 (July 1987): 635.

10. Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism* (New York, 1993), 20; Hutson, "Foundations," 6.

America have not credited much influence to the philosophes, stands on somewhat firmer ground. However, Montesquieu was one philosophe who was unquestionably influential, and he believed that "the natural effect of commerce is to lead to peace. Two nations that trade with each other become mutually dependent; if one has an interest in buying, the other has an interest in selling, and all unions are founded on mutual needs." Not only did commerce generate cooperation, Montesquieu maintained, it was "an almost general rule that everywhere there are gentle mores, there is commerce and that everywhere there is commerce, there are gentle mores." Gilbert inexplicably does not discuss Montesquieu, but Gerald Stourzh has indicated that Montesquieu's ideas about trade as an implement of international comity influenced early foreign policy in an idealistic direction.¹¹

Even if Hutson's claims about the marginal influence of the philosophes are essentially correct, this does not demonstrate the absence of ideas about the peaceful effects of international commerce. Perhaps these notions came from other sources, such as the Scottish Enlightenment. Thinkers in this tradition—Sir James Stuart, John Millar, and others—tended to see commerce as a "civilizing force" to temper aggressive passions and eventually bind nations together in a system of cooperation. Scottish thought was familiar to leading American statesmen, including Adams, Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin, who, incidentally, spent time in Edinburgh and explicitly endorsed David Hume's advocacy of free trade. Although Scots comprised only a little more than 5 percent of the late-eighteenth-century American population, their influence was greater than their numbers suggest, and they were a dominant force in education. For instance, except for Adams, the first five presidents were educated primarily by Scottish mentors, and higher education in the latter half of the eighteenth century was based largely on the Scottish model.¹² Or perhaps ideas about "peace and free trade" are best not attributed to philosophers at all; perhaps they arose from the interests and perceptions of a commercial people. However ideas gain

11. Hutson, "Foundations," 3; Gerald Stourzh, *Alexander Hamilton and the Ideal of Republican Government* (Stanford, 1970), 140–48; Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, ed. and trans. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, and Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge, England, 1989), 338. On Montesquieu and commerce see Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before its Triumph* (Princeton, 1977), 70–81; Nicos E. Devletoglou, "Montesquieu and the Wealth of Nations," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 29 (1963): 1–25; and Thomas L. Pangle, *Montesquieu's Philosophy of Liberalism: A Commentary on the Spirit of the Laws* (Chicago, 1973), chap. 7.

12. Hirschman, *Passions and the Interests*, 81; David Daiches, Peter Jones, and Jean Jones, *A Hotbed of Genius: The Scottish Enlightenment, 1730–1790* (Edinburgh, 1986), 137–44; William R. Brock, *Scotus Americanus: A Survey of the Sources for Links between Scotland and America in the Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1982), chap. 5; Gerald Stourzh, *Benjamin Franklin and American Foreign Policy* (Chicago, 1954), 108, 238. Stourzh writes that "well before the outbreak of the American Revolution, Franklin had come to accept the doctrines of free trade, subject, however, to the requirements of imperial defense as laid down in the essentials of the Navigation Acts. By the Declaration of Independence, America had liberated herself from these fetters, and Franklin now could extol the virtues of free trade without any restraint."

currency, to argue against the influence of the philosophes is not to demonstrate the absence of ideas kindred to their own.

Similarly, if ideas about a "new world order" did not come from the philosophes, they may have flowed from other sources, such as religious ones. For instance, Nathan Hatch, Ruth Bloch, and others have identified fervent strains of millennial thinking before, during, and after the Revolution that contributed to the perception that Americans were fighting not just for themselves but for the "future of liberty" and the "well being of the whole world." As a Massachusetts Presbyterian minister put the sentiment, the Revolution was "the grand cause of the whole human race" and would inaugurate "the happy period when tyranny, oppression, and wretchedness shall be banished from the earth, when universal love and liberty, peace & righteousness, shall prevail; when angry contentions shall be no more, and wars shall cease, even unto the ends of the earth." Even the dour John Adams saw fit to proclaim the founding of the colonies as being "the opening of a grand scene and design in Providence for the illumination of the ignorant, and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth." The vast literature on this topic makes it clear that millennial thinking had a compelling cultural presence, that religious millennialism and Enlightenment utopianism often merged so completely as to make it difficult to distinguish between the two, and that elements of nationalism and universalism melded into a passive messianism, according to which "American principles, not power, would ultimately prevail throughout the globe."¹³

The fundamental problem with Hutson's critique is that he must prove the absence of idealistic internationalism, and it is always harder to prove the absence of ideas than the presence of them. To get around this problem, he examines every letter in the files of the editorial office of the *Letters of Delegates to Congress* for the year 1776 and finds no mention of the philosophes or the notion that American foreign policy was "ushering in a new era in which power politics would be abolished by the magic of free trade, and peace and good will would reign among men."¹⁴ This is his best point against Gilbert, but several considerations need mention. First is the

13. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England* (New Haven, 1977), 88; Christopher M. Beam, "Millennialism and American Nationalism, 1740-1800," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 54 (1976): 186; Ruth H. Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756-1800* (New York, 1985), 71, 86. See also Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation* (Chicago, 1968); James West Davison, *The Logic of Millennial Thought: Eighteenth-Century New England* (New Haven, 1977); and the works listed in Kloppenberg, "Christianity," 12-13, esp. Hatch, Bloch, and Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison, 1978). Writing in 1777 to a friend about the opinion of Europeans living under "arbitrary power," Franklin states that "it is a common observation here that our cause is *the cause of all mankind*, and that we are fighting for their liberty in defending our own. It is a glorious task assigned us by Providence, which has, I trust, given us spirit and virtue equal to it." Franklin to Samuel Cooper, Paris, 1 May 1777, *The Works of Benjamin Franklin*, 12 vols., ed. John Bigelow (New York, 1904), 7:215-16 (emphasis in original).

14. Hutson, "Foundations," 4.

argument made above, that attributions of influence to the philosophes are not crucial to Gilbert's claims about commerce. Second, words and phrases such as "abolish," "magic," and "peace and good will would reign" are a rather extreme formulation of Gilbert's more qualified idea that the Founders embraced international commerce, envisioned it as promoting peace, and entertained notions of ushering in a new world order. Third, ideologies often manifest themselves as unstated assumptions, and the most potent ideologies are often the inarticulate ones. Letters from one group of men in one year cannot demonstrate the absence of something from even that one year, and certainly not the entire era in general.

Although much of the article is eminently sound, and though Hutson correctly identifies the significant presence of traditional thinking in early American ideology, he fails to refute Gilbert's discovery of idealistic internationalism. He contends that the Founders thought no differently from European statesmen, but the past generation of scholarship on the Revolution and the early Republic demonstrates that Americans perceived fundamental differences between their republican, liberal, and religious ideas and the traditional ideas of European statesmen. With its idealism, its internationalism, and its hostility to power politics and reasons of state, the thinking of Tom Paine demonstrates the presence of decidedly non-traditional—indeed, revolutionary—ideas in early American foreign relations.

Isaac Kramnick describes Paine as a "vintage liberal" in the tradition identified by Appleby. Paine envisioned a self-ordering, commercial society consisting of largely self-interested individuals. Government's role was to merely preside over these clashing interests; it held little positive role in promoting virtue. Paine attributes social order not primarily to government but to the "mutual and reciprocal interest" of individuals in society. Government was the enemy of order, not its guarantor; "riots and tumults" did not proceed from the want of a government. Instead, "government itself was the generating cause; instead of consolidating society, it divided it; it deprived it of its natural cohesion, and engendered discontents and disorders, which otherwise would not have existed."¹⁵ He claimed that during the American Revolution "there were no established forms of government. The old governments had been abolished, and the country was too much occupied in defense, to employ its attention to establishing new governments; yet during this interval, order and harmony were preserved as inviolate as

15. Kramnick, *Republicanism*, 154; idem, *Thomas Paine Reader*, 26. Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*, in *Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, 2 vols., ed. Philip S. Foner (New York, 1945), 1:359. Foner's edition is imperfect, yet still the best available. Annotated bibliographies on Paine studies are provided by A. Owen Aldridge, "Thomas Paine: A Survey of Research and Criticism since 1945," *British Studies Monitor* 5 (Winter 1975): 3–31; and Jerome Douglas Wilson, "Thomas Paine in America: An Annotated Bibliography 1900–1973," *Bulletin of Bibliography* 31 (October–December 1974): 133–51, 180. Eric Foner notes that "from 1776 to the end of his life, the hallmarks of Paine's political and social outlook remained remarkably constant." Foner, *Revolutionary America*, 87.

in any country in Europe." In this spontaneous order, virtue was highly desirable, but not necessary for civil peace. The danger to order came not from individuals bereft of virtue, but from excessive governmental power. Because liberal governments would have minimal coercive power, it was not crucial that their politicians be virtuous.¹⁶

Paine's enthusiasm for international trade surfaces in his first significant essay, *Common Sense*, where he asserts that "because it is in the interest of all Europe to have America a free port," a foreign policy based on commerce would secure it "the peace and friendship" of the continent. Independence would allow America to break free from mercantilistic restrictions and "shake hands with the world—live at peace with the world—and trade to any market" that would have it. Paine saw little contradiction between virtue and commerce; each supported the other. Commerce itself was virtuous because it was mutually beneficial and contributed to the wealth of nations. Increased wealth in a liberal republic would help protect it from internal counterrevolution and strengthen its defenses against the predations of despotic powers.¹⁷

Commerce would not only strengthen liberal republics internally, it would also serve their interests by transforming the international milieu. International trade would "temper the human mind," help peoples "to know and understand each other," and have a "civilizing effect" on all who participated in it. Commerce would encourage peace by drawing the world together into mutual dependency; the greater the amount of international trade, the lesser the likelihood of war. Because consumer goods "cannot be procured by war so cheaply or so commodiously as by commerce," liberal republics would avoid war because "war never can be in the interest of a trading nation." Commerce was a "pacific system, operating to unite mankind by rendering nations, as well as individuals, useful to each other." Contrary to mercantilist doctrine, Paine insisted that any lessening of commerce through war harms every nation involved regardless of where the reduction occurs, for when governments make war, "the attack is made upon the common stock of commerce, and the consequence is the same as if each had attacked his own." Its salutary effects were potentially tremendous, because "if commerce were permitted to act to the universal extent it

16. Paine, *Rights of Man*, in *Writings* 1:358; Kramnick, *Republicanism*, 151–60. "Society in every state is a blessing, but government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one." Some government was necessary for security because of the "failure of moral virtue to govern the world." Paine, *Common Sense*, in *Writings* 1:4–6. Welfare programs were needed temporarily in Europe, not America, to correct past abuses by powerful states. Elkins and McKittrick, *Age of Federalism*, 327; Foner, *Revolutionary America*, 93–94. On the role of the idea of "spontaneous order" in the Scottish Enlightenment see Ronald Hamowy, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Theory of Spontaneous Order* (Carbondale, IL, 1987).

17. Paine, *Common Sense*, in *Writings* 1:20; *The American Crisis* #3 (1777), *ibid.*, 80; Aldridge, *American Ideology*, 152; Foner, *Revolutionary America*, 153, 190; Fruchtman, *Religion of Nature*, 117.

is capable of, it would extirpate the system of war, and produce a revolution in the uncivilized state of governments."¹⁸

It is not only on the question of commerce that the case of Paine questions Hutson's attempt to refute Gilbert. Hutson rightly asserts that the principle that the interests of states are supreme is fundamental to realist thinking on international relations.¹⁹ The case of Paine, however, suggests that contrary ideas were also at work. Specifically, Paine argued that foreign policy ought to go beyond the interests of particular states to serve the interests of humankind. To understand this, it is helpful to first understand his distinction between "society" and "state."

The foundation of Paine's thinking on international relations was his belief that humankind could be grouped into two distinct classes. The first entity, which Paine labeled "society," consisted of the "productive classes," which included laborers, farmers, artisans, small merchants, and manufacturers not holding government-chartered monopolies. The second entity, which he labeled "the state," consisted of what he referred to as the "plundering classes," those who used state power to live off the productive classes through high taxation. This minority included government officials, standing armies, blue-water navies, aristocrats, established clergy, and holders of government-chartered monopolies. The dynamic of history was the conflict between these "two classes of men in the nation, those who pay taxes, and those who receive and live upon them": the struggle for supremacy between society and state.²⁰

In Paine's view, most warfare was essentially this conflict writ large. In part, war was an attempt by the plundering classes to increase revenue through the conquest of territories containing exploitable productive classes. In addition, it was an attempt by the plundering classes to distract their own productive classes from the abuses of government, for war served to "prevent people from looking into the defects and abuses of government." Government encouraged national chauvinism because "it will have no excuse for its enormous revenue and taxation, except it can prove that, somewhere or another, it has enemies." Most importantly, war was an attempt by the plundering classes to increase taxation in the territories already under their control by creating a crisis in which national humiliation or annihilation might result from resistance to tax increases. Paine asserted that "war is the common harvest of all those who participate in the division and expenditure of public money, in all countries. It is the art of *conquering at home*: the object of it is an increase of revenue; and as revenue cannot be increased without taxes, a pretense must be made for expenditures." In other words, "Taxes were not

18. Fruchtmann, *Religion of Nature*, 118; Paine, "Letter to the Abbe Raynal" (1782), in *Writings* 2:241; *American Crisis* #7 (1778), *ibid.* 1:145; *Rights of Man*, *ibid.*, 400-410, 449.

19. Hutson, "Foundations," 13.

20. Paine, *Common Sense*, in *Writings* 1:4-5; "Letter Addressed to the Addressers on the Late Proclamation!" (1792), *ibid.* 2:478.

raised to carry on wars, wars were raised to carry on taxes": The plundering classes who live on taxation promote war to raise revenue.²¹

In contrast to the plundering classes, war harms the productive classes because they "must all pay towards the expense" and gain none of the benefits. Successful wars of conquest do not lessen taxes; on the contrary, society is "taxed to pay for the charge of making them, and has not the same been the case in every war?" The plundering classes may "fatten on the folly of one country and the spoils of another; and, between their plunder and their prey, may go home rich. But the case is very different with the laboring farmer, the working tradesman, and the necessitous poor in England, the sweat of whose brow goes day after day to feed, in prodigality and sloth," the army that "plunders" the productive classes on all sides of international conflicts.²²

Paine, therefore, saw war as a system of exploitation. The "predatory classes" used state power to live off the "productive classes," the multitudes who labor at the base of the social pyramid. States were wedded to "a continual system of war and extortion."²³ The plundering classes' thirst for taxation meant that perpetual war was the fate of societies dominated by the state.

Though he opposed warfare calculated to benefit the interests of states, Paine sanctioned warfare intended to liberate societies from the domination of states he considered oppressive. It was necessary, for instance, for society to protect itself from the predations of invading states or invasive colonial restrictions. Also acceptable were civil wars in which societies attempt to free themselves from oppressive rulers; that is why *Rights of Man* was directed toward the British masses, and that is why that manifesto occasioned the British government to successfully try and convict Paine in absentia for treason.²⁴

Although he advocated civil wars of national liberation against despotic governments, he felt that it would be immoral for liberal republics to intervene into such conflicts. While a prominent figure in French politics, Paine usually opposed the nation's expansionist warfare. Writing to Danton, he lamented that because France's foreign policy paid "so little attention to moral principles" it served to "injure the character of the Revolution and discourage the progress of liberty all over the world." France had missed a chance to spread liberalism through moral example. "Had this Revolution been conducted consistently with its principles," Paine wrote Jefferson in 1793, "there was once a good prospect of extending liberty throughout the

21. *Rights of Man*, *ibid.* 1:449, 248, 283–84 (emphasis in original).

22. *American Crisis* #7, *ibid.*, 151; *American Crisis* #12 (1782), *ibid.*, 225; *Rights of Man*, *ibid.*, 362.

23. *Rights of Man*, *ibid.*, 361–62.

24. *American Crisis* #7, *ibid.*, 145; "Epistle to Quakers" (1776), *ibid.* 2:56–57; *Common Sense*, *ibid.* 1:45; *American Crisis* #5 (1778), *ibid.*, 120. On his trial see Williamson, *Thomas Paine*, 186–91; and Fruchtman, *Apostle of Freedom*, 288–91.

greatest part of Europe; but now I relinquish that hope. Should the enemy by venturing into France put themselves again in a condition of being captured, the hope will revive; but this is a risk that I do not wish to see tried, lest it should fail." If the defense of liberalism inspired the nations of invading states to overthrow their rulers and institute liberal republics, that was to be applauded, but wars of conquest generally were not.²⁵

Such warfare was also ultimately unnecessary, for the productive classes would eventually recognize their interests and become courageous enough (in part by reading *Rights of Man*, which Paine, with his usual modesty, thought "could take the place of all the books in the world") to overthrow despotic states and institute liberal republics. America's revolution was not merely a separation from England; it was a "new era for politics," a "new method of thinking." America had "made a stand, not for herself only, but for the world, and looked beyond the advantages she herself could receive." The cause of America was "in great measure the cause of all mankind," and its significance would affect "the principles of all lovers of mankind" and posterity until "the end of time." It was the beginning of the end for the old regimes, for the American Revolution began a new world order that by 1789 had extended to France and would travel from there to England and then outward from this North Atlantic core. Once liberal republics had been introduced to the world, "all attempts to oppose their progress will in the end be fruitless."²⁶

Accordingly, Paine envisioned his new world order as arising not through aggressive warfare on the part of liberal republics, but rather from the attraction that he believed liberalism held for ordinary people. The liberal idea was supposedly more powerful than arms, for an idea "will penetrate where an army of soldiers cannot; it will succeed where diplomatic management would fail; it is neither the Rhine, the Channel, nor the ocean that can arrest its progress: it will march on the horizon of the world, and it will conquer." Having conquered, liberal societies would trade freely,

25. Paine to Danton, Paris, 6 May 1793, *Writings* 2:1337. Paine's emphasis on morality contrasts sharply with the amoral basis of power politics. For a perceptive discussion of the relationship between power politics and morality in the context of Gilbert and Hutson see Jonathan Dull, "Benjamin Franklin and the Nature of Early American Diplomacy," *International History Review* 5 (August 1983): 346-63. Paine to Jefferson, Paris, 20 April 1793, *Writings* 2:1331. Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson have noted the close similarities between the thinking of Jefferson and Paine on international affairs. Tucker and Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson* (New York, 1990) 13, 43-44. See also Michael Durey, "Thomas Paine's Apostles: Radical Emigres and the Triumph of Jeffersonian Republicanism," *William and Mary Quarterly* 44 (October 1987): 661-88. Over time, Paine became more enthusiastic about wars of conquest. See Paine to General Brune, Dieppe, November 1799, *Writings* 2:1403-5.

26. David Powell, *Tom Paine: The Greatest Exile* (London, 1985), 197; Paine, *Common Sense*, in *Writings* 1:45, 17, 3; *Rights of Man*, *ibid.*, 398, 354-55. On Paine and "progress" see V. E. Gibbens, "Tom Paine and the Idea of Progress," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 66 (April 1942): 191-204. See also Robert Nisbet's analysis of Paine's close friend Condorcet in *History of the Idea of Progress* (New York, 1980), 122-36.

lower taxes, negotiate arms-control, and organize a European congress to resolve international conflicts. Relations between the Great Powers would transform from "war and mercantilism" into "peace and commerce." It would be what one recent commentator called "an end to history," a kind of secular millennium.²⁷

Despite his general hostility to state power, in his later career Paine grew impatient with the gradual, idealistic approach toward bringing about his millennial visions. Beginning with France's invasion of Belgium and the Dutch alliance of 1795 and continuing until 1802, Paine argued for a "descent on England" from the Dutch coastline. He proposed an invasion force of one thousand gunboats, each armed with one hundred men and a single cannon. True to his hatred of taxation, he claimed that the force could be equipped solely through voluntary donations. The hope was that such an invasion would spark a popular uprising against what Paine believed to be a despotic government. His plan, of course, was never attempted. He was also rather impatient regarding his hopes for the rest of the world. Assuming that his writings would lead to the establishment of a liberal republic in England, he proposed that a redeemed England could combine with France, Holland, and the United States into an irresistible confederation. They could "propose" a limitation of all fleets in Europe to one-tenth their present size, thus assuring a reduction in taxes. They could then "propose" to Spain that its possessions be opened to free trade and "command the Algerine piracy to cease." All of this was advanced as a nonviolent expedient until the triumph of liberal ideas, but it does contain more than a whiff of grape.²⁸

Enthusiasm—for human rights, private international commerce, secular millennialism, the power of ideas, the revolutionary transformation of international politics, and the assumption that others desire American institutions—is absent from the ideology of traditional, European diplomacy, but it is part of the ideology of early American foreign relations.

27. Paine, *Agrarian Justice* (1795–96), in *Writings* 1:622; *Rights of Man*, *ibid.*, 344, 448, 419; "Letter to the Abbe Raynal," *ibid.* 2:262; Paine to Jefferson, New Rochelle, NY, 30 January 1806, *ibid.*, 1477. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York, 1992). On Paine and millennialism see J. F. C. Harrison, "Thomas Paine and Millenarian Radicalism," in *Citizen of the World: Essays on Thomas Paine*, ed. Ian Dyck (London 1987), 73–85; Jack Fruchtman, Jr., "The Revolutionary Millennialism of Thomas Paine," in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, vol. 13, ed. O. M. Brack, Jr. (Madison, 1984), 65–77; and Stephen Newman, "A Note on Common Sense and Christian Eschatology," *Political Theory* 6 (February 1978): 101–8.

28. Paine, *Rights of Man*, in *Writings* 1:419, 448–51; Aldridge, "Thomas Paine's Plan for a Descent on England," *William and Mary Quarterly* 14 (January 1957): 74–84. Looking back from 1804, Paine wrote in the *Philadelphia Aurora* on the plan submitted to the Directory in 1798 that "Bonaparte was appointed to the command, and by an agreement between him and me, I was to accompany him, as the intention of the expedition was to give the people of England an opportunity of forming a government for themselves, and thereby bring about peace." "To the People of England on the Invasion of England," *Writings* 2:680. For a guide to the literature on Paine's reception in England, France, Germany, Austria, Bohemia, Cuba, Hungary, India, and Latin America see Aldridge, "Thomas Paine: A Survey of Research and Criticism since 1945," 22–25.

Hutson properly identifies the strong presence of traditional thought, but he ignores contrary thinking, fails to refute Gilbert, and does not consider how American culture might shape perceptions of what constitutes "realism" within a given historical context. Gilbert properly emphasizes the cultural concept of idealistic internationalism, but in trying to explain its presence he fails to support his thesis on the philosophes and neglects Montesquieu, the Scottish Enlightenment, religious sentiment, and, of course, subsequent scholarship on republicanism.

The case of Paine both supports and questions Michael Hunt's assertion in *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* that visions of national greatness, notions of racial superiority, and antipathy toward revolutions have guided American foreign policy from the beginning. The case of Paine strongly supports the first contention, and Hunt properly uses him to make his case. On the question of race, however, Paine provides an exception to Hunt's essentially correct generalization that Franklin's "consciousness of color" was "fully shared by his contemporaries." For example, Paine believed in universal human rights and seemed to consider all races equally capable of self-government, and his writings include withering attacks on African slavery in which he refers admiringly to traditional African culture. Similarly, on the question of revolution, the case of Paine suggests that Hunt overstates his case, and American responses to the revolutionary events of 1989–1993 and recent work by David Brion Davis show that Americans will welcome revolutions if they perceive them as promoting their cultural values.²⁹

Commenting on the Age of Revolution, John Adams lamented in 1807 that he knew

not whether any man in the world has had more influence on its inhabitants or affairs for the last thirty years than Tom Paine. There can be no severer satyr on the age. For such a mongrel between pig and puppy, begotten by a wild boar on a bitch wolf, never before in any age of the world was suffered by the poltroonery of mankind, to run through such a career of mischief. Call it the Age of Paine.³⁰

As Paine had anticipated, the balance of power has given way to an international system where the preponderance of power is held by liberal republics. Although warfare in general remains ubiquitous, and although liberal

29. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, 1987), 48. See Paine's "African Slavery in America" (1775), "A Serious Thought" (1775), and "Emancipation of Slaves" (1780) in *Writings* 2:15–22. From 1789 until his death in 1809, Paine supported the French cause with few reservations. This is especially noteworthy considering his near-fatal imprisonment during the Terror. See Aldridge, *Man of Reason*, 205–21; and Fruchtman, *Apostle of Freedom*, 313–22. On revolution in general see David Brion Davis, *Revolutions: Reflections on American Equality and Foreign Liberations* (Cambridge, MA, 1990); and Perkins, *Creation of a Republican Empire*.

30. John Adams to Benjamin Waterhouse, 29 October 1805, in *Statesman and Friend: Correspondence of John Adams with Benjamin Waterhouse, 1784–1802*, ed. Worthington Chauncey Ford (Boston, 1927), 31.

republics have been highly aggressive toward non-liberal cultures, warfare between liberal republics has been rare. Like Paine, most persons in liberal republics assume that history is unilinear and think of themselves as the vanguard of what they believe to be a historical progression of ever-greater freedom. Interconnected by commerce, travel, and other forms of communication, the liberal republics—and most of the world—are moving gradually toward greater integration and homogenization through the lowering of trade barriers and the growing significance of communication networks, international financial and legal agreements, and transnational bodies such as the European Union and the United Nations, an organization founded on the Painite ideal of abstract and universal rights, not the Burkean ideal of prescriptive and particularistic rights favored by Adams.³¹ If Adams were to view the modern age, would he not observe that it, too, is an age of Paine?

31. Among the vast literature on the relationship between liberal republics and war see especially Michael W. Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part I," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12 (Summer 1983): 205–35; and idem, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part II," *ibid.* (Fall 1983): 323–53. For a comparison of Adams and Burke on prescriptive rights see Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind from Burke to Eliot*, 6th ed. rev. (Washington, 1987), 12–113.